



Market Square facing Alexandria's City Hall



Existing park at the Potomac River waterfront



Four Mile Run



Streetscape at King Street

As one of the most densely populated cities in the nation, Alexandria faces a continuous struggle to provide enough open space for all its residents. With a growing and increasingly diverse population clamoring for open space options in the context of a dwindling supply of potential open spaces areas, the city must develop a strategy to respond to these conflicting pressures. The Open Space Plan presented in this document establishes a framework for addressing Alexandria's short and longer term open space needs. It defines an approach that maximizes the City's limited open space opportunities by creating a system that builds upon the City's dense, urban condition. It begins by acknowledging and protecting the City's existing open spaces, and goes on to identify additional open space opportunities for the future.

There is a clear desire for additional open space for both active and passive purposes. Yet, enormous efforts will be required simply to maintain the existing ratio of open space per capita as Alexandria's population continues to grow. Between 1990 and 2000, the ratio of open space compared to population stayed constant because the City added 125 acres of open space. Population projections for the year 2012 require that the City add another 100 acres of open space to maintain that ratio. And that number assumes that existing public open space will not be diminished.

Against this backdrop, the City's need for an Open Space Plan becomes critical. The plan was developed through a collaborative community process that included monthly meetings with an Open Space Steering Committee, three Planning District meetings, and a citywide Open Space Summit.

As the result of this process, a series of 15 open space goals were identified. These form the overall framework for the Open Space Plan:

Goal 1. Protect and enrich existing parks

Goal 2. Develop innovative opportunities for creating additional open space

Goal 3. Complete implementation of the Potomac River Waterfront Plan

Goal 4. Protect and expand stream valleys and other environmentally sensitive areas

Goal 5. Create an open space network in new development areas

Goal 6. Protect and preserve institutional open space



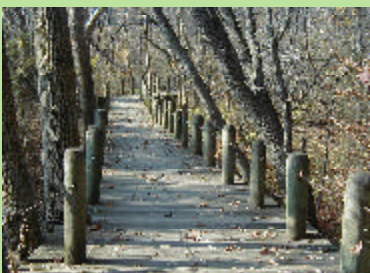
King Street metro and surrounding urban fabric



Potomac River waterfront



Holmes Run Stream Valley



Existing trails



Potomac River waterfront

Goal 7. Maximize use of public school open space areas

Goal 8. Preserve and protect cemeteries

Goal 9. Create public open space from vacant land

Goal 10. Link and expand pedestrian, bicycle and trail system

Goal 11. Enhance streetscapes and gateways

Goal 12. Expand citywide street tree program and protect existing trees and woodland areas

Goal 13. Encourage the creation of Civic Parks at and adjacent to Metro stations

Goal 14. Beautify interchanges and highway corridors

Goal 15. Protect privately owned open space

The plan presents recommended actions and implementation strategies for each defined goal. It also defines those actions that the City needs to make its first priority in implementing the Open Space Plan. These priority actions include:

- Creating an Alexandria Open Space Conservancy
- Hiring a full-time, professional grants writer to pursue public and private sector funding.
- Beginning completion of the Alexandria Waterfront Plan.
- Preparing a Greenway Management Plan for Holmes Run Stream Valley.
- Focusing on the protection and enhancement of the City's Resource Protection Areas.
- Beginning to preserve specific properties as open space areas (as defined in the Plan) through easements, acquisition, and other means of protection.
- Revising zoning requirements to achieve better open space in new developments.
- Considering the creation of additional active recreation opportunities on open spaces located east of Simpson Field.
- Developing a workable open space conservation strategy for the City's major institutional lands.
- Rehabilitating Commonwealth Avenue as a significant parkway.
- Implementing a system of new path/trail linkages at Holmes Run, at the eastern end of Eisenhower Valley, and from Booth Park to Fairfax County along Backlick Run.
- Establishing a streetscape and gateway enhancement program for Route 1.



Potomac River shoreline



Mount Vernon recreational center



Historical Old Town, Alexandria

- Implementing a CITYgreen analysis to assess the status of tree cover in the City.

Because all of the above priorities cannot be tackled simultaneously, it is suggested that the City consider the following timeframe sequence as a guideline for implementing the above actions:

Year 1:

- Create the Alexandria Open Space Conservancy.
- Hire the grants writer.
- Begin to define a strategy that will allow the City to respond quickly to preserve “at risk” sites as open space as these become available.
- Revise zoning requirements for new developments.

Years 2-3:

- Work to achieve settlement on 1 and 2 King Street, and 0 Prince Street in order to begin completion of the Alexandria Waterfront Plan.
- Begin preparation of a greenway management plan for Holmes Run.
- Initiate a system of monitoring the City’s progress on its protection and enhancement of RPA’s.
- Begin a dialogue between the Open Space Conservancy and the City’s major institutional landholders to develop a strategy for conserving such land.

Years 3-5:

- Establish new trail crossing of Holmes Run at Chambliss Street.
- Connect the off-street Eisenhower Valley path to Old Town at Payne Street.
- Develop a strategy for creating additional active open space near Simpson Field.

Years 5-7:

- Rehabilitate Commonwealth Avenue.
- Create a trail along Backlick Run, from Booth Park the Fairfax County line.
- Begin a CITYgreen analysis of Alexandria tree cover.
- Establish a streetscape and gateway enhancement plan for Route 1 (to be implemented in years 7-10).

Finally, the Open Space Plan identifies and describes potential funding sources and strategies. Operational funding strategies, as well as sources of public and institutional grants, are discussed. Funding/strategies include:

- Dedicated trusts (including land trusts and conservation/preservation funds, open space funds, and local service districts)

- Bonds (e.g., general obligation bonds, revenue bonds)
- Taxes and general fund money
- Easements
- Public and institutional grants
- Operational support mechanisms (e.g., corporate support, volunteer programs)